



Diane Bondaroff/Associated Press

Hjordy Matos, a student at City College, attends a protest rally Wednesday at Teachers College a Columbia University in New York, one day after Professor Madonna Constantine, who is black, discovered a hangman's noose on her office door at Teachers College.

Rash of noose incidents reported across country in wake of Jena case

BY ERRIN HAINES
Associated Press

ATLANTA — In the months since nooses dangling from a schoolyard tree roused racial tensions in Jena, La., the frightening symbol of segregation-era lynchings has been turning up around the country.

Nooses were left in a black Coast Guard cadet's bag, at a Long Island police station locker room, on a Maryland college campus, and, just this week, on the office door of a black professor at Columbia University in New York.

The noose — like the burning cross — is a generations-old means of instilling racial fear. But some experts suspect the Jena furor reintroduced some bigots to the rope. They say the recent incidents might also reflect white resentment over the protests in Louisiana.

"It certainly looks like it's been a rash of these incidents, and presumably, most of them are in response to the events in Jena," said Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks white supremacists and other hate groups. "I would say that as a more general matter, it seems fairly clear that noose incidents have been on the rise for some years."

Thousands of demonstrators,

including the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, converged on Jena on Sept. 20 to decry what they called a racist double standard in the justice system. They protested the way six blacks were arrested on attempted murder charges in the beating of a white student, while three whites were suspended but not prosecuted for hanging nooses in a tree in August 2006.

The noose evokes the lynchings of the Jim Crow South and "is a symbol that can be deployed with no ambiguity. People understand exactly what it means," said William Jelani Cobb, a professor of black American history at Spelman College in Atlanta.

He said the Jena incident demonstrated to some racists how offensive the sight of a noose can be: "What Jena did was reintroduce that symbol into the discussion."

Though the terror of the civil rights era is gone, the association between nooses and violence — even death — remains, Potok said.

"The noose is replacing the burning cross in the mind of much of the public as the leading symbol of the Klan," Potok said.

Potok dismissed the idea that the placing of a noose could be interpreted as a joke, even among people born after the end

of segregation.

As word of the Jena case began circulating, reports of similar incidents arose.

In July, a noose was left in the bag of a black Coast Guard cadet aboard a cutter. A noose was found in August on the office floor of a white officer who had been conducting race-relations training in response to the incident.

In early September, a noose was discovered at the University of Maryland in a tree near a building that houses several black-campus groups.

On Sept. 29, a noose appeared in the locker room of the Hempstead, N.Y., police department, which recently touted its efforts to recruit minorities.

On Oct. 2, a noose was seen hanging on a utility pole at the Anniston Army Depot.

Last week, the president of historically black Grambling State University in Louisiana announced he would seek sanctions against five teachers who participated in a lesson on race relations that included placing a noose around the neck of a child at a mostly black, on-campus elementary school.

The Columbia incident involved a black professor of psychology and education, Madonna Constantine, who teaches a class on racial justice.

Simpson says Siegelman dropped challenge to avoid prosecution

BY BOB JOHNSON
Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — A lawyer's claim that former Gov. Don Siegelman was promised an end to a federal probe of his administration if he dropped his challenge of the 2002 governor's race was met with emphatic denials Wednesday by Republicans named in her sworn testimony.

Jill Simpson, a Huntsville lawyer who assisted Republican Bob Riley's campaign in 2002 against the Democratic incumbent, said Riley's son, Rob Riley, told her of the offer to close the Justice Department probe of Siegelman.

Rob Riley said her claim was unbelievable.

"If it had happened, we'd have heard about it before now from Don Siegelman," said Rob Riley.

Siegelman, who conceded the narrow loss in November 2002 but continued to be investigated and prosecuted by the Justice Department, has never made any comment indicating such an offer was made.

Siegelman attorney David McDonald declined to comment Wednesday on the Simpson claim.

"I don't have any comment on that issue. The only thing I want to comment on is that we have an innocent man sitting in prison and I hope the 11th Circuit will let him out," McDonald said.

A 143-page transcript of Simpson's sworn testimony to House Judiciary Committee investigators on Sept. 14 also includes more details of her allegation that White House political adviser Karl Rove manipulated the Justice Department probe of Siegelman at the behest of Bill Canary, a GOP operative whose wife is the U.S. attorney in Montgomery.

"What I understood, or what I believed Mr. Canary told me, was that he had had this ongoing conversation with Karl Rove about Don Siegelman, and that

Don Siegelman was a thorn to them and basically he was going to — he had been talking with Rove. Rove had been talking with the Justice Department, and they were pursuing Don Siegelman as a result of Rove talking to the Justice Department at the request of Bill Canary," Simpson says in the transcript.

Career federal prosecutors who handled the Siegelman prosecution have repeatedly denied any political tampering in their case. The U.S. attorney, Laura Canary, recused herself from the investigation in May 2002, months before the alleged deal described by Simpson.

Bill Canary also has disputed the Simpson account.

According to Simpson, Rob Riley told her that Republican attorney Terry Butts told Siegelman the federal investigation would "go away" if he dropped his challenge. She said Siegelman was also told that if he quit the race, pictures showing a Siegelman supporter putting up a Bob Riley campaign signs outside a Jackson County Ku Klux Klan rally would also go away.

"And in that conversation basically, Mr. Siegelman had been offered to go ahead and concede, that the pictures would not come out and that they would not further prosecute him with the justice department," Simpson told the committee attorneys, according to the transcript.

She said Riley also implied that Siegelman was to also drop out of Alabama politics.

Rob Riley vehemently denied making the statements to Simpson.

"Jill Simpson is making up her story as she goes along. It becomes more ridiculous and more unbelievable every time she speaks," said Riley.

Butts, a former Alabama Supreme Court justice, denied that he had a conversation with Siegelman about dropping his challenge.

"I would have had no authority of any kind to ever even make an offer. It just didn't happen. Absolutely not," Butts said.

In the transcript, Simpson said Rob Riley once assured her that U.S. District Judge Mark Fuller, a Republican appointee and the trial judge in Siegelman's case, would make sure Siegelman was found guilty.

Simpson's attorney, Priscilla Duncan of Montgomery, said Wednesday the statement to the committee about the offer to drop the case against Siegelman was not a contradiction to her affidavit about the Riley signs at the Klan rally.

"She's just talking about other things now," Duncan said. "The affidavit was four pages long and this statement took four hours so obviously they got into other things. There's nothing in the statement that contradicted her affidavit."

But Rob Riley questioned why Simpson did not mention Siegelman being told the prosecution would go away if he dropped out of the race.

"If she really believes it today, why didn't she put it in her affidavit?" Riley asked.

In her House committee testimony, Simpson said Rob Riley told her that he knew Fuller when he was in college and that Fuller was a staunch Republican who would make sure Siegelman was convicted.

"He made a statement that Fuller would hang Don Siegelman," Simpson said.

She said Riley also told her about Fuller's interest in a private company with contracts with the government. Earlier this year, Fuller turned down a request by Scrushy's lawyers to give Scrushy a new trial and recuse himself from the case because of the alleged conflict.

Riley said Wednesday that he does not know Fuller and never met him while at the University of Alabama.

Panel supports new drug-coated stent

BY CHEN MAY YEE
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

MINNEAPOLIS — Medical advisers to the Food and Drug Administration recommended Wednesday that the FDA allow Medtronic Inc. to sell its Endeavor drug-coated stent in the U.S., setting the stage for a battle over a new generation of cardiac devices next year.

The nine-member panel voted unanimously that the device should be approved, but set two conditions reflecting recent safety concerns: Medtronic must conduct a safety study of the device for five years after it reaches the market and address concerns about blood clots by including wording on the label recommending use of anti-clotting drugs.

Medtronic's is the first of the so-called new generation of drug-coated stents to be recommended for approval for sale in this country. It is racing against a rival product, Xience, from Abbott Laboratories to reach the coveted U.S. market.

Scott Ward, president of Medtronic's cardiovascular division, said he expected Endeavor to gain final approval from the FDA by the end of the year. The FDA typically follows the recommendation of its advisory panels. Medtronic already sells the Endeavor stent in Asia and Europe and the Fridley-based device maker has beefed up its production capabilities as well as its U.S. sales force over the past year. The company expects to have 100,000 stents on the market within a month of launch, Ward said.

The Xience stent is set to be reviewed by the same panel of independent physicians in late November. In addition, Boston Scientific Corp. is expected to launch its Taxus Liberté later next year, making 2008 a year of heated competition in the stent market.

Right now, the drug-coated stent market is shared between Boston Scientific's Taxus and Johnson & Johnson's Cypher, collectively expected to bring in \$2 billion in U.S. sales this year.

OBITUARIES

FUNERALS TODAY

Louise H. Calhoun, 11AM, Gray Brown-Service Mortuary

Cordella S. Clevenger, 4PM, Coldwater Baptist Cemetery

Elaine Ledbetter, 3PM, First United Methodist Church Anniston

Heather L. Sprayberry, 2PM, Chapel Hill Funeral Home

Larry F. White, 3PM, Hopewell Advent Christian Church

LeFair Willingham, Sr., 2PM, Mt. Liberty Baptist Church

Dianne Wynn, 1PM, Friendship Baptist Church of Anniston

AMMONS

Anniston — Infant Eugene William Ammons, of Anniston, passed away Monday at UAB.

Survivors include: his dad and mom, Larry and Angela Ammons; a sister, Klorissa Ammons; his grandparents, Lucille Ammons and William and Jackie Roberts; great-grandparents, Herman and Frances Murray; an aunt, Tammy Hedlund of Florida; and an uncle, Danny Sweat, Jr., of Heflin.

Master Ammons is preceded in death by two grandfathers, Eugene Ammons and Olan Littleton.

Gray Brown-Service Mortuary in charge of arrangements.

junior year at Jacksonville State University.

Miss Pesnell is survived by her parents, Jimmy and Karen Smith Pesnell; brother, Paul Pesnell; niece, Dakota LaShane Pesnell and grandmothers, Mae Smith and Bobbie Pesnell, all of Heflin.

Funeral services will be held Friday, October 12, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. from Miller Funeral Home Chapel with Rev. Ron Carroll and Rev. Grover Robinson officiating. Interment will follow in Oak Grove Baptist Church Cemetery. The family will receive friends this evening, October 11, 2007 from 6-9 p.m. EST at Miller Funeral Home in Tallapoosa, GA.

Fallbearers serving will be Jason Bearden, Brandon Crosson, Shane McAlpin, DeWayne Snow, Matt Smith and Zach Smith.

Miller Funeral Home of Tallapoosa, is in charge of arrangements.

CHILDS

Jackson, AL — Graveside services for Mrs. Mary Clyde Childs, 82, will be 12:00 p.m. Friday in Clay County Memorial Gardens. Visitation from 10:00 a.m. until service time.

GAUTNEY

Mobile, AL — Graveside services for Mrs. Wyman Boyd Gautney, 91, will be 10:00 a.m. Friday at Longshore Cemetery Visitation from 6-8 p.m. tonight at Perry Funeral Home.

JOHNSON

Hobbs City, AL — Funeral services for Mrs. Aldora Johnson, 89, will be announced by Ervin Funeral Chapel. Mrs. Johnson died Tuesday at Princeton BMC.

MATTOX

Ashland — Funeral services for Mrs. Frances Mattox, 92, of Ashland, AL will be 3:00 p.m., Friday at Clay County Funeral Home Chapel. Visitation will be tonight from 6-8 p.m. at the funeral home.

PESNELL

Heflin, AL — Miss Karen LaShane Pesnell, age 21, of Heflin, Alabama passed away October 8, 2007 from injuries sustained in a car accident.

Miss Pesnell was born October 11, 1985 in Carroll County. She was preceded in death by her grandfathers, Rev. Herbert Smith and William Joe Pesnell. LaShane was a full time student in her

WHITE

Leesburg, AL — Funeral services for Larry F. White, 52, will be 3:00 p.m. today at Hopewell Advent Christian Church. Mr. White will lie in state at the church one hour prior to service.



WILSON

Lineville — Funeral services for Bertha Wood Wilson, 44, of Lineville, Alabama will be Friday, October 12, 2007 at 1:00 p.m., at the Spring Hill Baptist Church in Lineville, Alabama, with Rev. Darryl Wood officiating. Burial will be in the Lineville Community Cemetery in Lineville with Anniston Funeral Services in charge. The body will be at the church two hours prior to service.

Mrs. Wood died on October 7, 2007 at UAB Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama.

Survivors include two sons, Nicholas Wood and Derrick Wilson; a devoted and loving friend, Demetrius Fugley; mother, Naomi Wood; three sisters, Mary Wood, Beverly (Roger)

Anniston Star Obituary Policy

It is the policy of The Anniston Star to publish obituaries of local residents and former local residents. Obituaries must be submitted by funeral homes. Obituaries are not accepted from family members or friends of the deceased.

Death notices up to eight lines of type are published at no charge. Death notices can include the deceased person's name, age, address, date of death, time and place of services, and the funeral home in charge of arrangements. This information must be submitted to The Star by a funeral home.

Obituaries published in The Anniston Star are also published on The Anniston Star Online at no additional charge. Photographs are accepted for publication. Fees for obituaries in The Star are billed directly to the funeral homes. Payment is not accepted from family members or friends of the deceased.

The Star reserves the right to edit obituaries. In most instances the family's content and style will be published in the form submitted to us. There are no limits on numbers of survivors, pallbearers, honorary pallbearers, or any other information the family wants included, so long as good taste and judgment prevail.